

Historicism (1941)

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Historicism—Dr. Leo Strauss

[Plan of the Lecture]

1. Historicism is provisionally defined as the tendency to overemphasize history to the detriment of philosophy.
2. Historicism may be said to be the spirit of our age. This thesis will be illustrated by a cursory survey of the progress of historical thought.
3. Historicism has a certain justification as the attitude permeating genuine historical research.
4. The meaning of “exactness” in historical studies.
5. The philosophic question concerning historicism is whether philosophy is essentially separated from, and superior to, history of any kind, or whether the traditional separation of philosophy from history ought to be abandoned.
6. The philosophic question mentioned is only one aspect, if probably the most important aspect, of “*la querelle des anciens et des modernes*” as seen from today.
7. Historicism is in many cases a polite description of what is properly to be called intellectual laziness.
8. The question of “historical objectivity” and the original meaning of history as political history.^b

^a This typescript can be found in the Leo Strauss Papers, box 6, folder 14. It was transcribed by Scott Nelson and J. A. Colen and reviewed and annotated by Daniel Tanguay.

^b [LS handwritten remark] History of human thought is based on specifically *modern* assumptions; hence it becomes *problematic* as soon as these assumptions become problematic;

Introduction

The intention of this lecture is to submit to you certain general¹⁵ considerations concerning¹⁶ historicism. The question of historicism was brought up in this seminar by Dr. Heimann,^a who contrasted the historical approach in economics with the classical, nonhistorical approach; and, more directly, by Dr. Salomon,^b who read a paper on historical sociology. Thus, it can hardly be denied that my subject is germane to the broader subject of this seminar. I should like to discuss it in a very broad, and even in a sweeping, manner. For I am afraid that we might forget the wood for the trees. No doubt, one cannot know the wood without knowing the trees; but it is doubtful whether one must know, or describe, each individual tree if one wants to know, or to describe, the wood. Unfortunately, my subject is so comprehensive that I cannot even *mention* certain extremely important aspects of the question: I had to limit myself to those aspects which, to my mind, are most apt to be overlooked. What I regret most is that I am unable to discuss in my paper the application of the principles to such¹⁷ questions as are of immediate concern¹⁸ to every social scientist. Opportunities to do¹⁹ this will no doubt arise in the discussion, or else in later meetings of this seminar.

²⁰My paper is most closely related, as far as its topic is concerned, with the paper of Dr. Salomon on the one hand, and with that of Dr. Winter^c on the other. Dr. Salomon spoke on historical sociology, and Dr. Winter is going to speak on Plato and Aristotle today. I shall start where Dr. Salomon left off, and I shall leave off where Dr. Winter will start. Dr. Salomon's thesis, as far as it is relevant to *my* thesis, amounted to this: Historical sociology is not a new subdivision of sociology, such as rural sociology, but rather a re-interpretation of sociology as a whole. Just as historical jurisprudence was a reinterpretation of jurisprudence as a whole, and historical economics was a reinterpretation of economics as a whole. But "reinterpretation" is a some-

yet: precisely if these assumptions become problematic, history of human thought becomes of *utmost* urgency; only on the basis of this doubt can history of human thought live up to the highest standards of *exactness* (for as long as one believes in the superiority of modern thought, one does not pay the highest possible attention to the past) and thus become what it intends to be: adequate understanding of the thought of the past in the service of philosophy.

^a Eduard Heimann (1889–1967), a German economist and sociologist, taught at the New School from 1933 to 1958.

^b Albert Salomon (1891–1966), a German sociologist, taught at the New School from 1935 to 1966.

^c Ernst Karl Winter (1895–1959) was an Austrian sociologist and politician.

what misleading expression: just as the relation of historical jurisprudence to nonhistorical jurisprudence was one of *antagonism*, historical sociology implies a *criticism* of sociology as usually understood. Historical sociology is the revolutionary attempt to make sociology radically historical. Historical sociology is therefore one form of historicism.

Historicism cannot be understood but as a reaction to the rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Modern rationalism and historicism belong together. If historicism should prove to be untenable, some doubt is cast on modern rationalism which paved the way for it. Since we cannot possibly take leave of reason altogether, the question arises: whether rationalism is necessarily *modern* rationalism. In other words: whether pre-modern rationalism, classical rationalism, is not preferable to modern rationalism and all its descendants, one of which is historicism. It is for this reason that my paper leads from the historical sociology of Dr. Salomon's paper to the Plato and Aristotle today of Dr. Winter's paper.

Lest I should be completely misunderstood, I must say a word about my starting point. In the thought of our time, we can discern three fundamentally different trends: (1) The numerically most powerful group of scholars consists of those who believe that the tradition of modern natural science, which was the backbone of the philosophic development since Descartes, should *remain* the backbone of philosophy—the modern ones.²¹ (2) Another group (Bergson, Heidegger) believes that the break, effected by Descartes and his successors, with the classical tradition was a decisive progress, and that a return to pre-Cartesian philosophy is impossible; but, they add, that break was not radical enough; they demand a new type of philosophy, based on a radical criticism of the Greek foundations of modern philosophy and modern science. This demand for a *new* philosophy, for a new *type* of philosophy, for a philosophy of the *future* was heard for the first time in the generation succeeding Hegel (Feuerbach)—the ultra-modern ones.²² (3) A third group consisting of people who doubt that the philosophic development since Descartes is a progress in any philosophically relevant sense: neo-Thomism, Third Humanism,^a Nietzsche's return to the pre-Socratics—the antimodern ones.²³

I believe it is reasonable not to take sides in this controversy before one

^a Third Humanism was an intellectual movement that emerged in Germany around 1930. It attempted to restore classical humanism by giving it a strong political dimension. One of its proponents was the classicist Werner Jaeger. See in particular *Humanistische Reden und Vorträge* (Berlin/Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1937).

has studied *afresh* all the evidence pro and con. But I believe also that the mere fact that a tradition of three centuries is now seriously doubted is a real *boon* for philosophy. For the beginning of philosophy is wonder, and there are too many things which have ceased to be a matter of wonder and surprise since generations—which have been taken for granted since centuries.²⁴

Historicism

(Lecture to be delivered in the fall of 1941 in the General Seminar)

1. As far as we can speak at all of the spirit of a time, we can assert with confidence that the spirit of *our* time is historicism. By “historicism” we understand to begin with that trend of human thought which overemphasizes²⁵ “history” in the double meaning of that term: “history” as historical *knowledge* and “history” as the *object* of historical²⁶ knowledge which is the all-embracing and yet unfinished and fragmentary,²⁷ constantly changing texture made up by human actions, human productions, human habits,²⁸ human sufferings, human institutions, and, last but not least, human thoughts and speeches. A historicist, we may say to begin with, is a man who devotes all his intellectual powers to the contemplation and the understanding of that all-embracing texture, or of single phases and aspects of it, or of any significant individual phenomenon of human life of the present or of the past, but preferably of the past, with no other intention except to understand the past.²⁹ Historicism thus understood was attacked in the year 1872 by Friedrich Nietzsche in the³⁰ second of his *Reflections Out of Season: On the Advantage and the Disadvantage of History for Life*,³¹ with such a success that it is no longer a force with which we have to reckon. Today, it is fairly generally admitted that history, historical knowledge, is not an end in itself; that it is not only desirable but necessary that history should be in the service of life, of action. From this point of view, “historicism” came to mean that trend of human thought which overemphasizes the *past*, the usual domain of history, to the detriment of the *present*; which forgets *action* which always is concerned with the present or future, in favor of contemplation of, or longing for, the irrevocable past. Yet, as I said before, “historicism” thus understood is no longer a serious danger. To describe that historicism which confronts us today, we need a broader definition of historicism, a definition equally applicable to nineteenth century *and* to³² twentieth-century historicism. We shall then say that historicism is that trend of human thought which overemphasizes history to the detriment of more important things. And when we use the term “historicism” emphati-

cally, we mean by it the tendency to overemphasize history to the detriment of *philosophy*. In the extreme case, which is evidently incapable of realization, historicism would be the tendency to *replace* philosophy by history. In the *typical* case, historicism is the tendency to *obliterate* the fundamental *difference* between philosophy and history, and in particular between philosophy and *intellectual* history. In the most *common* case, it is the tendency on the part of philosophers to devote their attention to the past or to the present or to the future rather than to what is always or the eternal.

The definition which I suggest is preferable to³³ the usual one because it is more comprehensive than the latter. If I understand the usual view of historicism correctly, historicism is the doctrine that “everything is historical,” i.e., that it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between the invariable (“eternal”) and the variable elements of human things; that doctrine is based on the observation, or assertion, that any such distinction between invariables and variables is itself determined by the historical situation of the scholar who makes it; therefore, all knowledge, all beliefs, all standards, all institutions are of a limited validity, of a validity limited by the historical situation to which they belong: there is no knowledge nor standard of conduct valid for man as man; the historical situation limiting the claim of a doctrine to be true, e.g., may be of a very short duration, but it may also be an epoch of two millennia. The³⁴ propositions of science, it is asserted, are not absolutely true, or eternally valid; for, it is argued, how can that be *true* which is not even *meaningful*?³⁵ Now, the propositions of modern science, for example,³⁶ would not even be meaningful to the ancient Greeks, for example. Thus, *modern* science is essentially “relative” to *modern* man. This view has been stated³⁷ with unusual clarity and sincerity by Spengler,^a but it is held by many people who reject, or believe that they reject, Spengler’s doctrine. For how else can we account for the fact that it has become customary since some time to speak of “modern science,” or “Western science,” or “classical science” or “Babylonian science,” to say nothing of “capitalist” science and “Aryan” science?³⁸ This manner of speaking implies that there is not one human science valid for all times and nations, if actualized³⁹ only by⁴⁰ certain people in certain periods. It reduces *science*, i.e., *true* knowledge of causes, to the level of *doctrines*, which as such are not necessarily true but may be a conglomeration of superstitions.

^a Strauss probably refers here to Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), vol. 1, chap. 2, sections 3 to 5, pp. 59–67.

When what *we* call *modern* science emerged, the champions of that science attacked, not ancient *science*, or scholastic *science*, but what they believed to be⁴¹ a *pseudo-science*, and they attacked it in the name, not of *modern* science, but of the *only true* science. The view that all science and all other “ideas” of the human mind are historical, i.e., relative to definite historical situations and not meaningful beyond those situations, is what is⁴² usually meant by the term “historicism.” For my present purpose, I am in need of a more comprehensive if somewhat more vague⁴³ definition. According to that definition, historicism is the tendency to overemphasize history to the detriment of philosophy.

2. Historicism in the sense defined is the spirit of our time. *History* in the sense of *knowledge* of the past, or *records* of the past, or *memory* of the past, may be said to be⁴⁴ almost as old as the human race. But it never played such a role as it plays today. It is a matter of course to us that history—history of all kinds, political history, social history, economic history, history of art, history of religion, history of civilization, history of literature, history of philosophy, history of science, history of medicine, history of history—is taught at the universities, but it was only about a few centuries⁴⁵ ago that chairs for history, i.e., for political history only, were established for the first time in European universities. Most⁴⁶ other sections of our historical teaching and training are of a still more recent origin. It was the romantic movement in Germany which brought about the substitution of *historical* jurisprudence, *historical* political science, *historical* economic science for *natural* jurisprudence (i.e., natural law), *natural* political science, *natural* economic science. When we look up the plans of studies which Plato sketches in his *Republic* and⁴⁷ in his *Laws*, we find mathematics, astronomy, and dialectics⁴⁸—we do not find the slightest trace of history. There is no difference in this respect between Plato and Aristotle: Aristotle said that poetry is more philosophic, i.e., more scientific, than history.⁴⁹ This attitude is characteristic of all philosophers of antiquity and of all their followers throughout the Middle Ages. History was not a part of the highest kind of learning up to the sixteenth century, and even in important respects up to the eighteenth century. History was highly praised, not by the philosophers, or men of science, but—by the rhetoricians. It is perhaps not out of place to mention the facts that Augustine, who is frequently referred to as a “philosopher of history,” was originally a teacher of rhetoric, and that Giambattista

^a [LS note] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.51b5.

Vico, one of the most renowned precursors⁵⁰ of historicism, was a professor of rhetoric. The words of high praise⁵¹ which Cicero bestows upon history occur in his rhetorical rather than⁵² in his philosophic writings. It is true, Jews and Christians were deeply interested in biblical history. But—to say nothing of the fact that Jews as Jews and Christians as Christians are not necessarily philosophers⁵³—they were interested in biblical history⁵⁴ not *as* history, but as legal, moral, and theological documents of a revealed, and therefore absolutely true, character.^a It was rather⁵⁵ philosophers *attacking* the absolute claims of the Bible who⁵⁶ engaged, for that limited purpose, in truly historical observations concerning the Bible and the biblical tradition. Things changed fundamentally since the sixteenth century only. No earlier political philosopher⁵⁷ known to me ever spoke of history with so much emphasis as did Machiavelli,⁵⁸ Bodin and Bacon and even Hobbes. And yet it was for Bacon still a matter of course that the seat of historical learning is memory, and not reason, whereas the seat of philosophic learning, the highest type of learning, is reason, and not memory. As regards the time after Bacon, one may say that the interest in history increased almost from generation to generation at an ever-accelerated pace. Since the end of the seventeenth century, people started to speak of “the spirit of a time.”⁵⁹ Toward the middle of the eighteenth century, *Voltaire* coined the *paradoxical*⁶⁰ term “philosophy of history” (1756, introduction to *Essai sur les mœurs*). In the philosophy of Hegel, philosophy and history have completely merged. Similarly, the central thesis of Comte’s positivist philosophy cannot be stated but in historical terms. As far as human things are concerned (human knowledge, ideals, institutions), the same holds true of the evolutionism of the second half of the nineteenth century. The exact sciences and the philosophic schools most closely related to them had become, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of our century, the last bulwark of a relatively nonhistorical⁶¹ attitude; those schools insisted against historicism on the fundamental difference between the philosophic question of the *validity* of knowledge and science, and the historical question of the *origin* of knowledge and science, and on the superior dignity and importance of the philosophic question. The attack for example on that particular brand of historicism which calls itself sociology of knowledge was based on that distinction between the philosophic⁶² question of validity and the historical⁶³ question of origin. How terrible must have been the shock

^a [LS note] cf. Thomas, *S. Th.* I qs. 1 [art. 2 ad 2.].

to the nonhistorical epistemologists, when the most profound and most radical epistemologist of our century, Edmund Husserl, rejected what he called “the predominant dogma of the fundamental separation of epistemological elucidation and historical explanation” (*das herrschende Dogma von der prinzipiellen Trennung von erkenntnistheoretischer Aufklärung und historischer Erklärung*).^a

Historicism is then that trend of human thought which tends toward the merging either of philosophy and history in general, or of philosophy and intellectual history in particular. Of that trend, it can safely be said that it is today all-pervasive. It is characteristic not only of phenomenology, but likewise of Hegelianism, Marxism, sociology of knowledge—of the adherents of Dilthey and Spengler as much as of those of Dewey. It expresses itself in very many different ways, and it justifies itself on the most different intellectual levels. But it is essentially the same trend in all cases: the trend toward the merger of philosophy and history.

Today, we all are historicists to begin with. Where are the liberals who dare appeal to⁶⁴ the *natural* rights of man? They prefer to appeal⁶⁵ to the *tradition* of liberalism. Historicism is the basic assumption common to present-day⁶⁶ democracy, communism, fascism. Before we have read any philosopher, we know already from hearsay that every philosophy is essentially historical, i.e., the expression of its time, of the *spirit*, or *soul*, of its time, or of the *socioeconomic situation* of its time. Almost before we can read and write, we are told that there is no such thing as an unchangeable human nature; and since a moment’s reflection is sufficient to refute this alphabetic assertion, we are told when we are changing over from the kindergarten to the first grade that the unchangeable nature of man consists in his being “historical,” i.e., in his being *actually*, so to speak, nothing, but *potentially* almost everything, or that the changing aspects of human life are more important than the invariable ones, for, it is argued, the orientation by the invariable aspects leads one to an “abstract” view of human na-

^a [LS note inside the text] “Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem,” p. 220.] Strauss quotes here the first edition of this text published in *Revue internationale de philosophie* 1, no. 2 (1939): 203–25. It appears subsequently in Walter Biemel’s edition of *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954) as *Beilage III*, pp. 365–86. For an English translation, see *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 370.

ture, and the “concrete” meaning of the invariable factors *entirely* depends on the variable historical settings.

In order not to be misunderstood, I must mention in passing that the term “unchangeable human nature” is ambiguous. In a sense, no one can deny that man can change, and does change, his nature. Even the nonhistorical philosophers of antiquity knew this much. One of their pupils went so far as to assert that man can even *expel* nature with a *hayfork*; he added, however, that nature will always⁶⁷ come back.^a

3.⁶⁸ However historicism may be understood, the historicism of the kindergarten as well as the historicism of the highest possible level have this in common, that they presuppose, or demand, the merging of philosophy and history. Historicism leads to a historical philosophy and—in a sense—to⁶⁹ a philosophic history. To speak first of the last aspect: one is justified in saying that at no earlier epoch did man devote so much intelligence and zeal to the investigation of the past as such, of all phases and aspects of the past, as he does since the nineteenth century. Never before was there at work such a truly universal interest in each significant individual phenomenon of human life, of the past as well as of the present. Therefore, one may expect that, generally speaking, our understanding⁷⁰ of the past is superior to that of any earlier age. This is not in itself something to boast of:⁷¹ erudition does not teach to have sense, as Heraclitus said.⁷² It became of decisive importance merely because of the particular circumstances in which historicism arose.⁷³

The position which preceded historicism was the belief in progress: the belief in the superiority, say, of the late eighteenth century to any earlier age in all important respects, and the hope for still further progress in the future. The belief in progress stands midway between the nonhistorical view of the philosophic tradition and historicism. Belief in progress agrees with the philosophic tradition in so far as both admit that there are universally valid standards [of truth and justice],⁷⁴ standards which are not susceptible of⁷⁵ any historical justification.⁷⁶ The belief in progress deviates from the philosophic tradition, in so far as it is essentially a view concerning “the historical process”: it stands and falls with the thesis that there is such a thing as “the historical process” and that that process is, essentially and generally speaking, a progress, an increasing approximation to the universal

^a See Horace, *Epistles* 1.10.24.

standards of truth and justice. As a consequence, the belief in progress, as distinguished from the view of the philosophic tradition, can legitimately be criticized on purely historical grounds. This was done by early⁷⁷ historicism, which showed in a number of important cases—the most famous example is the interpretation of the Middle Ages—that the progressivist *view* of the past was based on an utterly insufficient *understanding* of the past. And this was fatal to progressivism, in so far as it was an assertion concerning the *past*.⁷⁸ It is evident that our understanding of the past, and of each individual period of the past, will tend to be the more adequate, the more we are *interested* in the past; but one cannot be seriously interested, *passionately* interested in the past if one knows beforehand that the present, the modern period, is superior in the most important respects to the past. Historians who started from this assumption felt no necessity to understand the past *by itself*; they understood it as a preparation of the present only. (A glance at almost any textbook of the history of political and social ideas suffices to see that this approach is still, to put it mildly, lingering on.)⁷⁹ The progressivist,⁸⁰ when studying a doctrine of the past, will not ask primarily, what was the conscious and deliberate intention of the originator of the doctrine in question? but rather, what is the meaning, *unknown* to the originator, of the doctrine from our present point of view? What is the contribution of that doctrine to our present beliefs?⁸¹ The progressivist takes it for granted that he can understand the phenomena of the past better than the contemporaries could [he is convinced in spite, or because, of his being a man of mediocre intelligence that he can understand Plato better than Plato could understand himself].⁸² The historicist on the other hand tries to revitalize that understanding of each period of the past which that period itself had. This truly universal interest in the past as past, or, more precisely, in each significant individual phenomenon of human life as individual phenomenon, is opposed not only to the belief in progress, but likewise to the philosophic tradition which was concerned, not with individuals, but with types, not with the *history* of *individual* phenomena (e.g., of the modern state), but with the *natural genesis* of *typical* phenomena (e.g., of the political community). These prehistoricist positions were not interested in understanding the past as it really was, “*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*,” as it appeared to the people who lived it, who experienced it; they did not understand the past from *its* point of view, but from an allegedly, or really, superior point of view. By rejecting the belief in progress in particular, in favor of the belief that “each period is immediate to God,” historicism

paved the way for a much higher degree of historical exactness than was considered necessary in former times.^a Today, after a century and more of passionate discussions concerning the right method of historical studies, all true historians submit, in principle, to rules such as these: (1) Each period of the past must be understood by itself, and must not be judged by standards alien to it. (2) Before one can *judge* a phenomenon of the past, or before one can *explain* it in terms of its socioeconomic determinants, for example, one must have *understood* it thoroughly by itself: adequate interpretation is the indispensable prerequisite for *judgment* or *explanation*. (3) Only such presentations of the views of an earlier author can be accepted as true as are ultimately borne out by explicit statements of the author himself: the true historian, when confronted with an image invented by a superior man—the character of Falstaff, the knocking at the gate in *Macbeth*, Faust's descent to the mothers, the adventures of Don Quixote, the travels of Odysseus⁸³—will suppress those dreamy thoughts of his or others which are aroused by the image in question, but will not rest nor remit until he has brought to light that lucid thought which the author wanted to convey by that image⁸⁴ to his sober and serious⁸⁵ readers.⁸⁶ (4) Each author of the past must be interpreted, as much as possible, by himself: no term of any consequence must be used in the interpretation of an author which cannot be literally translated into the language of the author, and which has not been used by the author himself or which was not in fairly common use in his time.

The up-to-date historians are very exacting people. They forbid themselves many easygoing habits of the former generations. They forbid themselves to speak of a *system* of philosophy if the author of a philosophic doctrine did not consider his doctrine a "system"; or to speak of Plato's "metaphysics" or of Socrates as the founder of "ethics," or of the Greek "theory of the State," or of Greek "religion," or of the "religion" of the Bible or of the "philosophy of history" of the Bible, since terms such as these do not occur in the vocabulary of the books or men in question. For Plato never spoke of "metaphysics," Socrates apparently never spoke of "ethics," the Greek language has no words which could be translated by "State" or

^a Strauss quotes two famous dictums of the German historian Leopold von Ranke. The first dictum, "wie es eigentlich gewesen ist" (how it really happened), is an excerpt of the *Preface to the First Edition of Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations*, in *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), 137. The second dictum, "each period is immediate to God," can be found in the *First Lecture to King Maximilian of Bavaria* "On the Epochs of Modern History," in *ibid.*, 53.

“religion,” nor are there words in biblical Hebrew which could be translated by “religion” or “philosophy” or “history.” The historians argue that the great men of the past showed themselves perfectly able to express every thought which they had and which they *wanted* to express, and if the⁸⁷ language of their nation lacked a term which could express a thought of theirs, they were perfectly able to coin a new term; therefore, if they did not use a certain term, the specific thought abbreviated by that term never occurred to them; consequently, if we should use that term in the interpretation of their thoughts, we would substitute more often than not a modern cliché for a living thought of antiquity; in any case, we would impute to them a thought alien to them, and grossly neglect our duties as historians. The modern historians who know their duties know from experience that whenever they catch themselves in the act of uncritically applying a modern term to a premodern phenomenon, they are led to see a very serious philosophic⁸⁸ problem which up to then escaped their notice.

While the modern historian accepts as binding the rules which I have intimated, he⁸⁹ very rarely lives up to them, owing to the weakness of the flesh. As a matter of fact, I do not know of a single historical study which is beyond reproach from the point of view of exact historical research. That study known to me which comes nearest to the goal of historical exactness is J. Klein’s⁹⁰ analysis of Greek logistics and the genesis of modern algebra.⁹¹

When making a serious effort to live up to the standards of historical exactness, the historian is bound to have, sooner or later, an interesting experience. One notices, e.g., that in many important cases the medieval interpreters of Aristotle who were living in historical surroundings essentially different from those in which Aristotle had lived, and who did not even know the Greek language,⁹² were better able to understand Aristotle than are most⁹³ modern historians. Now, the medieval commentators, such men as Averroes and Thomas Aquinas, were not historicists. This shows⁹⁴ that, in order to understand adequately a phenomenon of the past, one need⁹⁵ not be a historicist, nor need⁹⁶ one possess a “philosophy of history”: one merely must use one’s eyes and one’s head, and one must be animated by a serious interest in that phenomenon of the past with which one happens to deal. Thus, the claim of historicism to have opened up a more adequate understanding of the past becomes more and more doubtful. One finally

^a [LS note] It is only fair to add that I have not yet been able to read Prof. Koyré’s work on Galilei. (Strauss probably refers to Alexandre Koyré, *Études galiléennes* (Paris: Hermann, 1939).

arrives at the suspicion that, in the most important cases, historicism *prevents* one from understanding the past. For to understand a phenomenon, one must take it seriously; one must be willing, for example, to consider it possible that a certain doctrine of the fifth century BC or of the twelfth century AD is *the* true doctrine; one must familiarize oneself with the outlook of the author by *practicing* it; one has not understood an author of the past as long as one does not know from intimate knowledge how he would have reacted to our modern refutations of his doctrine. Now, historicism denies,⁹⁷ by its definition, the reasonableness⁹⁸ of a nonhistorical philosophy; it denies, a priori, that any doctrine of the past can be *the* true doctrine.⁹⁹ Accordingly, the historicist is per se unable to understand adequately a non-historical position:¹⁰⁰ as little as according to the predominant view¹⁰¹ the dogmatic Aristotelians of the seventeenth century were able and willing to understand Galileo, as little is the historicist of our day able to understand Plato or Aristotle or the Bible. Historicism once acted as a truly liberating force when it was dissolving certain specific prejudices of the European past; today, it is acting as a blinder, for it has become a prejudice itself. This is not to deny, nor necessarily to assert, that historicism understands other phenomena, in which no one was seriously interested in former ages, much better than did the greatest men of earlier times; no conceivable harm is done if we admit that certain contemporaries of ours¹⁰² understand the plastic art¹⁰³ of the African Negroes better than Plato or Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas or Descartes or Kant could have done.¹⁰⁴

Generally speaking, we can say: if we take historicism seriously, if we take seriously the view that the whole past must be understood adequately, we are on the best way of overcoming historicism. For historicism is a very recent thing: practically the whole past thought and thinks nonhistorically.¹⁰⁵ By understanding the premodern past, we familiarize ourselves with an essentially nonhistorical approach. By assimilating ourselves to that nonhistorical approach, we are learning gradually, slowly, not without pains, to look at things with the eyes of nonhistorical human beings, with the eyes of *natural* human beings. I.e., historicism considers each historical individuality as something which can be measured only by its *own* standard; he does *not judge*; but a rational human being *does* judge: foolishly, if he is a fool, wisely, if he is wise.¹⁰⁶ But let me hurry back from that utopia to our imperfect present.

4. The radical problem of historicism is *not* whether or not historicism enables us to understand adequately the past, but whether and how far

historical knowledge has philosophic relevance. As regards *that* question, we are confronted with the suggestion, which in certain quarters has degenerated¹⁰⁷ into a foregone conclusion, that the traditional separation of philosophy and history should be abandoned¹⁰⁸ once and for all. We are then confronted with the *alternative* of a nonhistorical philosophy and an intrinsically historical philosophy. The question as to what approach—the nonhistorical approach or the historical approach—is the *right* approach is a *philosophic* and not a *historical* question. But if we want to answer that philosophic question, if we want to know adequately what can be said *pro et con* each side of the alternative, if we want to *elaborate* that *philosophic* question, we cannot help engaging in *historical* studies. For there does not exist any longer any significant philosophic position which is not tinged by historicism: if we want to know what nonhistorical philosophy really means, we have to go back to the past.

If we could trust certain romantic writers, we might expect to find a truly nonhistorical or unhistorical position in eighteenth-century rationalism. For one of the most successful charges brought against eighteenth-century rationalism is precisely this, that it utterly lacked “historical consciousness”: not only did it believe in an eternal natural right, it even indulged in such utterly unhistorical conjectural accounts of the origin of society and government as are the doctrines of a presocial¹⁰⁹ state of nature.¹¹⁰ [The implication of such charges is that up to the emergence of the revolutionary philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, man possessed “historical consciousness.” This romantic view is based on a¹¹¹ grave mistake:¹¹² it mistakes¹¹³ traditionalist thought, the habit of thought characteristic of former ages, for¹¹⁴ historical thought. Actually, traditionalist thought presupposes the belief, irreconcilable with historicism, that the tradition to which one happens to adhere is absolutely superior to any other tradition; the Romanist jurists of former ages, for example, accepted Roman law, not so much¹¹⁵ for historical reasons as¹¹⁶ because they considered Roman law the *ratio scripta*, human reason itself in its utmost perfection laid down in writing.] Actually, however,¹¹⁷ the thought of eighteenth-century philosophy was much more historical than that of any earlier philosophy. The clearest sign of that historical trend is exactly the doctrine of the state of nature, which may be historically erroneous but which was meant to be a *historical* account, if a hypothetical account,¹¹⁸ as distinguished from, and opposed to, a *miraculous* account, of the origins of civilization, an account which should be the *introduction* for¹¹⁹ a coherent account of the *one* process of

civilization itself. The only justification of the romantic verdict is contained in the fact that eighteenth-century rationalism was as convinced of the superiority of the present to the whole past as no earlier philosophy had been. But *contempt* of the past is not in itself a sign of a nonhistorical way of thinking. On the contrary: if that low view of the past is an integral part of one's philosophy, it is a sign that one's philosophy is essentially historical. Closer study shows that not only eighteenth-century philosophy, but above all that of the seventeenth century presupposes a turn from philosophy to history which has taken place in the sixteenth century, and whose greatest exponents were Bodin and Bacon. Therefore, if we want to get hold of an unambiguously nonhistorical philosophic position,¹²⁰ we have to go back to ancient and medieval philosophy. And we have *got* to get hold of such a position, if we want to elaborate the *philosophic* question as to what approach—a nonhistorical approach or a historical approach—is the right philosophic approach.

This means: as matters stand *today, in our time*, one is unable to elaborate, and to answer, a fundamental *philosophic* question without actually becoming a *historian* of philosophy. This may be called a historical justification of historical studies; it certainly is not, and is not intended to be, a philosophic justification. We do not assert an *essential* connection between philosophy on the one hand, and historical studies concerning philosophy on the other, for if we did, we should beg the decisive question; we merely assert an *accidental* connection: since certain possibilities have been *forgotten* since some time (and there was no inescapable necessity of their being forgotten), they must be recovered by means of historical research. Nothing prevents us from visualizing a time when history will again have sunk back into its former philosophic insignificance. For does not historicism itself assert that every human doctrine as a *historical* phenomenon is "historically relative," and is not historicism a human doctrine?

5.¹²¹ *In our time*, the elaboration of the elementary philosophic questions requires serious and intensive historical studies. Until a generation ago, the superiority of the modern approach, i.e., of the habits of thought which have emerged since the Renaissance, to the earlier approaches was generally taken for granted. Those philosophers who were in opposition to the predominant trend of modern thought—such men as Bergson and W. James—demanded an essentially *new* kind of philosophizing, a kind of philosophy which should be still more different from premodern thought than from the thought of the seventeenth till nineteenth centuries. In the

meantime, the essential superiority of modern philosophy to premodern philosophy has become doubtful to an ever-increasing number of people. The success of neo-Thomism is a byword. But neo-Thomism is merely the most popular form of a much broader trend whose most powerful and most profound representative was, and still is, the unknown Nietzsche. The question as to whether the moderns are superior to the ancients, or the ancients are superior to the moderns, has again become a *question*, and even the most fundamental question: for it concerns the *approach* to *all* philosophic questions, it concerns the *method* of all philosophic investigations. That question has been the topic of a famous discussion at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, of *la querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Most of you will remember Swift's *Battle of the Books*, in which the moderns are compared to the spider which "boasts of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from itself," and the ancients to the bee "which, by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and *distinction of things*, brings home honey and wax," "thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light."^a [That controversy, it was believed, has been decided by "*history*" in favor of the moderns. But the verdict of "*history*," i.e., of the public opinion of two centuries, is not decisive. Those who did not know it before can learn it today that the victorious cause is not *necessarily* the good cause.]¹²² The question of the ancients and the moderns remains then an open question to which only a fool will offer a ready-made answer. To answer that question, and indeed to understand what it means, we need historical studies: *exact* confrontations of the ancient and the moderns. I say, *exact* confrontations, i.e., such confrontations as present the ancients from *their* point of view, and *not* from the modern point of view. For if we were to¹²³ present the thought of the¹²⁴ ancients from the point of view of the moderns, we should beg the decisive question: we should tacitly presuppose the superiority of the modern approach. But these historical studies are not an end in themselves, they are merely preparatory to a future attempt to settle the *philosophic* question.

[Someone might object that we do not need new historical studies since we *know* the ancients: are their doctrines not clearly and adequately set forth¹²⁵ in the books of the great scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth

^a See Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub with Other Early Works 1696–1707* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 150–51. The emphasis is Strauss's.

centuries, and especially of¹²⁶ the classical scholars of our time? The answer must be in the negative. For it is impossible that a classical scholar, as far as he is a classical scholar, should understand ancient thought. The classical scholar is not an ancient thinker, he is a modern man: his modern prejudices are bound to interfere with his understanding of the ancients, if he does not methodically reflect on the modern presuppositions as such. Such a reflection transcends the limits of classical scholarship, and must be entrusted to philosophic historians.]¹²⁷

6.¹²⁸ We are then confronted with the paradoxical fact that extensive studies in the field of *history* of philosophy, the full-time job of more than one generation of scholars, have become a prerequisite of *philosophic* studies. This paradoxical fact is the necessary outcome of the modern development, and in particular of the belief in progress which is characteristic of the predominant trend of modern thought. The founding fathers of modern philosophy, while being no doubt genuine philosophers, conceived of philosophy in such a way that a degeneration of philosophic thought became unavoidable. Philosophy, we may say, is the attempt to arrive at a free, unbiased understanding of all things, or the most important things; i.e., philosophic understanding is fundamentally distinguished from, and opposed to, a *traditional* understanding. Philosophy and a given tradition *may* agree, but this is purely accidental from the point of view of philosophy. When the founding fathers of modern philosophy opposed scholasticism as a *tradition*, they did merely what any genuine philosopher would have done. But they went much beyond that. They may be said to have started from the following fact. It seems necessary that the knowledge of a man who is equally intelligent and diligent as his teacher, if external conditions are the same, should become greater, more advanced, than the knowledge which his teacher possessed. Now, everything depends on what we understand by "greater" knowledge. If we understand by greater knowledge more *extensive* knowledge, the knowledge of the pupil will necessarily be greater than that of his teacher. But if we understand by greater knowledge a knowledge which is more *profound*, the knowledge of the pupil is *not* necessarily greater than that of the teacher. For it may very well be that the teacher devoted all his intellectual powers to elucidating the most fundamental question, and that the pupil simply *took over* his teacher's answer to that question without bothering too much about the question. The founding fathers of modern philosophy asserted not merely that, all other things being equal, the knowledge of the perfect pupil will finally be superior to the knowledge of

the perfect teacher; they went so far as to assert that, just as the knowledge of each individual progresses in the course of his life, the knowledge of the whole human race necessarily advances from day to day, i.e., from generation to generation. In asserting this, they underrated the difference between inherited knowledge, i.e., the knowledge which one acquires in schools and universities, and independently acquired knowledge, i.e., knowledge acquired by a mature scholar. Thus it came to pass that inherited knowledge was given the same cognitive status as independently acquired knowledge. (Witness the phrase: the results of modern research.)¹²⁹ Whereas, actually, inherited knowledge is hardly distinguishable from prejudice: inherited knowledge is, in the typical¹³⁰ case, a collection of true prejudices.¹³¹ This is the ultimate reason why all modern philosophy and all modern science, as distinguished from premodern philosophy and premodern science, absolutely *depends* on history of philosophy and history of science: since modern knowledge consists to a considerable extent of inherited knowledge (this is implied in the very concept of progress of knowledge as we usually understand it), it is indispensable that that inherited knowledge, or our true prejudices, be transformed into genuine knowledge; and in order to do this, we have to go back to the point when that knowledge which *we* have inherited was originally acquired. In some cases, it so happens that what, to begin with, is supposed to be inherited¹³² *knowledge* or *true* prejudice proves to be an *inherited error*.

If the question of the ancients and the moderns is a *question*, it follows that we cannot take it for granted any longer that there is such a thing as History, i.e., an object or field or a dimension fundamentally distinguished from Nature. For History as the object of historical knowledge is a discovery, or invention, of *modern* thought. One of the most urgent duties of the philosophic scholar would be to describe in terms of ancient thought what we, in our language, call History. When this has been done, we shall be in a position to discuss the question whether the ancient view of the matter is inferior, or superior, to the modern view.¹³³ It is hardly necessary to add that the term “philosophy of history” is subject to the same grave doubt as “History” itself.

7.¹³⁴ Our very admitting the possibility that the question of the ancients and the moderns is an open question presupposes a break, not only with the belief in necessary progress of thought, but likewise with historicism in the usual sense of the term. For historicism asserts that every philosophy is essentially related to the *time* in which it emerged. Accordingly, resto-

rations of earlier positions are considered impossible. [Every renaissance, it is asserted, is a transformation. In many cases, it could be shown that what claims to be a restoration is merely a transformation of an earlier doctrine. But this does not prove that restorations in the strict sense are *impossible*. More's *Utopia*, for example, is a perfect restoration of classical principles. That these principles are applied by Thomas More to the economic situation of sixteenth-century England does not affect at all the principles themselves.]¹³⁵

Let us consider from this point of view the example of neo-Thomism. The historicist would say that the venture of neo-Thomism is absurd, for neo-Thomism is the attempt to restore a medieval position in the modern world, but a medieval position is *per se* inapplicable to modern conditions. But even if the essentially medieval character of all essential tenets of Thomism were demonstrated, the question would still remain whether the Middle Ages were not just the period *most favorable* for the emergence of *the* true doctrine, so that modern man could do nothing better than to take his bearings by the most elaborate medieval position. Some people would argue: Thomism is merely an interpretation of Aristotle, and Aristotle's philosophy has been refuted by modern science; even if we know nothing of modern science, we know at least this much, that it *works*. But does it really work? I am not competent to say a single word about modern natural science. But as regards modern *social* science, can it be said to work, as long as its very objectivity is an unsolved problem, as long as we are confronted with the choice between an objective social science which does not lead to any "value judgments" and irresponsible personal "decisions"?

We may speak of *the* historicist fallacy, which is that history proves anything as to the truth or falsehood of any doctrine, that *a tempore ad veritatem valet consequentia*. History proves nothing, so to say, because the relation between a doctrine and the time of its emergence is essentially *ambiguous*: the time at which a doctrine emerged may have been *favorable* to the discovery of a truth, and it may have been unfavorable. Only the philosophic study of the doctrine by itself with a¹³⁶ view to its truth or falsehood or one-sidedness permits us to *interpret* the relation between a doctrine and its historical setting. Another form of the historicist fallacy is the assertion that the history of ethical or metaphysical doctrines supplies us, as such, as history, with the refutation of the "absolute" claim of all ethical or metaphysical doctrines; it is asserted that¹³⁷ the mere spectacle of the anarchy of the systems proves that all of them are invalid. Actually, the

different doctrines merely *contradict* each other. And it is incumbent, not on the historian, but on the philosopher, to find out which of the two contradictory doctrines is the true doctrine, or perhaps whether the evidence at our disposal permits us at all to answer that question but compels us rather to engage in other philosophic studies. Historicism in the usual sense is merely the fashionable form of intellectual laziness.

History does not prove the historical relativity of all philosophy: it would prove, in the best case, that *hitherto* all philosophy has been historically relative, i.e., that all philosophies known to us have been a failure—that all attempts, *hitherto made*, to discover the truth about God, the universe, and man have failed. But what else does this mean except that philosophy, quest for truth about the most important things, is as necessary as ever? And this is so far from being a new insight, due to historicism, that it is implied in the very *name* “philosophy,” which means that no man is wise, knowing the truth, but in the best case a seeker for truth. Historicism might¹³⁸ offer us¹³⁹ a proof of our ignorance concerning the most important subjects—of which ignorance we can be aware without historicism—but by not deriving from that insight into our ignorance the urge to seek for knowledge, for philosophic knowledge, historicism betrays a lamentable or ridiculous self-complacency.¹⁴⁰

Notes

1. *NRH*, 9–34. See also *WIPP*, 25–27 and 56–77, and “On Collingwood’s Philosophy of History,” *Review of Metaphysics* 5, no. 4 (June 1952): 559–86.

2. Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck, 1922).

3. Rutkoff and Scott, *New School*, 84–106.

4. *Ibid.*, 137–43.

5. The young Strauss had already presented the general contours of this crisis in three texts dating from the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s: “Der Konseptivismus” (1929), “Religiöse Lage der Gegenwart” (1930), and “Die geistige Lage der Gegenwart” (1932). These texts can be found in the second volume of Heinrich Meier’s edition: Leo Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften, Philosophie und Gesetz—Frühe Schriften*, ed. Heinrich Meier and Wiebke Meier (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1997), 365–75, 377–91, and 441–64.

6. For a well-documented synthetic presentation of the concept and its history, see George G. Iggers, *The German Concept of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 124–228. See also the same author’s “Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term”

(*Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 1 [January 1995]: 149–152) as well as Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeichen des Historismus: Studien zur Problemgeschichte der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

7. *NRH*, 12–20.

8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 59–123.

9. The real question that historicism poses is that of the very possibility of philosophy. Already in this lecture one sees the terms of the problem that will be at the heart of *NRH* clarifying themselves. For Strauss, the question of natural right is thus subordinated to the more fundamental question of the possibility of philosophy.

10. Strauss says: “Our most urgent need can only be satisfied by means of historical studies which would enable us to understand classical philosophy exactly as it understood itself, and not in the way in which it presents itself on the basis of historicism.” *NRH*, 33.

11. On this question, see *PAW*, 155–58.

12. Strauss is obviously referring here to the work of his friend Jacob Klein: cf. Jacob Klein, “Die griechische Logistik und die Entstehung der Algebra,” in *Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Mathematik, Astronomie und Physik* (Berlin), Abteilung B: *Studien*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1934): 18–105; vol. 3, no. 2 (1936): 122–235, translated later as *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968).

13. In *Natural Right and History*, Strauss relativizes the ultimate philosophical value of this argument when he discusses what he calls “radical historicism.” This more philosophically conscious form of historicism seems untouched by the internal logical contradiction of the “vulgar” historicist thesis. See *NRH*, 25–33.

14. “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 49–51. See Strauss’s commentary on this text: “Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Political Philosophy,” in *SPPP*, 29–37. Strauss indicates that Husserl subsequently renounced his original critical position in, among other places, one of the philosopher’s last essays, which Strauss quotes on page 10, “Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentional-historisches Problem,” *Revue internationale de philosophie* 1, no. 2 (1939): 203–25. For an English translation, see the appendix of Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 352–78.

15. “general” was inserted by hand.

16. “concerning” was inserted by hand replacing “on.”

17. “Such” was inserted by hand to replace “concrete.”

18. “As are of immediate concern to every” was inserted by hand to replace “interesting the.”

19. “to do” was inserted by hand to replace “of doing.”

20. Square bracket was inserted by hand.

21. “—the modern ones” was inserted by hand.

22. “ones” was inserted by hand.

23. “—the anti-modern ones” was inserted by hand.

24. The part of the sentence reading “too many things . . . since centuries” was inserted by hand.

25. “over” in “overemphasizes” was inserted by hand.

26. “historical” in “historical knowledge” was inserted by hand to replace “that” which was crossed out.

27. The words “yet unfinished and fragmentary,” was inserted by hand.

28. The words “human habits,” were inserted by hand.

29. In “except to understand the past” the words “the past” were added by hand.

30. “the” was inserted by hand replacing “his.”

31. “of his *Reflections Out of Season*” was inserted by hand to replace “*Untimely Reflections*” which was crossed out.

32. “to” was inserted by hand.

33. “is preferable to” was inserted by hand to replace “differs from.”

34. Strauss capitalized “The” in “The propositions of science” in order to mark the beginning of a new sentence, after an illegible word crossed out.

35. “, it is asserted,” and “, it is argued,” were inserted by hand.

36. “E.g.” after “modern science” was inserted by hand.

37. “stated” was inserted by typewriter to replace “held” which was crossed out.

38. The part of the sentence reading “to say nothing of ‘capitalist’ science and ‘Aryan’ science” was added by hand in the margin.

39. “actualized” was inserted by hand to replace “actually accessible,” which was crossed out.

40. “by” was inserted by hand to replace “to,” which was crossed out.

41. “believed to be” was inserted by hand to replace “called,” which was crossed out.

42. “what is” was inserted by hand.

43. “if somewhat more vague” was inserted by hand.

44. “may be said to be” was inserted by hand to replace “is” which was crossed out.

45. “a few centuries” was inserted by hand to replace “300 years,” which was crossed out.

46. Above “The” the word “Most” was added by hand, possibly as an alternative.

47. “and” was inserted by hand to replace “or” which was crossed out.

48. “dialectics” was inserted by hand to replace “philosophy,” which was crossed out.

49. Above the words “Plato and Aristotle: Aristotle” the words “One cannot quote often enough” were added by hand, while above “said” the word “saying” was inserted by hand, possibly as an alternative.

50. The part of the sentence reading “of place to mention the facts . . . one of the most renowned pre-” was added by hand at the bottom of the page.

51. Between “The” and “words of high praise,” the word “high” was crossed out.

52. The words “rather than” were inserted by hand to replace “not,” which was crossed out.

53. The words “—to say nothing of the fact . . . philosophers—” were added by hand at the bottom of the page, with a sign indicating where they should be inserted in the text.

54. “Biblical history” was inserted by hand to replace “it,” which was crossed out.

55. “It [were] rather” was inserted by hand to replace “Only,” which was crossed out.

56. “who” between “Bible” and “engaged” was added by hand.

57. Between the words “earlier” and “philosopher” the word “pol.” was added, presumably to be read as “political.” It is unclear, however, whether it was intended to be an insertion.

58. Above “Bodin” “Machiavelli” was added by hand. It is unclear, however, whether it was intended to be an insertion.

59. This sentence was inserted by hand.

60. “*paradoxical*” was inserted and underlined by hand.

61. “non-” in “nonhistorical attitude” was inserted by hand to replace “a-” which was crossed out. Since Strauss systematically changed “ahistorical” to “nonhistorical” throughout the remainder of the typescript, the editors have opted not to mention these changes in further footnotes.

62. “philosophic” was inserted by hand.

63. “historical” was inserted by hand.

64. “appeal to” was inserted by typewriter to replace “invoke” which was crossed out.

65. “appeal” was inserted by typewriter to replace “invoke” which was crossed out.

66. Between “present-day” and “democracy,” the word “liberal” was crossed out.

67. “always” was inserted by hand.

68. “3.” was inserted by hand.

69. “—in a sense—to” was inserted by hand.

70. “understanding” was inserted by hand to replace “knowledge,” which was crossed out.

71. “this is not in itself something to boast of” was inserted by hand to replace “a decisive advantage,” which was crossed out.

72. The words “erudition . . . Heraclitus said.” were inserted by hand at the bottom of the page, with a sign indicating where they should be inserted in the text. Heraclitus, fragment 40 [Diels-Kranz]; see also Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 36 [fr. 18].

73. “of” following “became” was inserted by hand to replace “a,” which was crossed out. “importance” was inserted by hand to replace “advantage,” which was crossed out.

74. Square brackets were inserted by hand.

75. Above “do not require,” the words “are not susceptible of” were inserted by hand, possibly as an alternative

76. Above “justification,” the word “legitimation” was inserted by hand, possibly as an alternative.

77. Above “by” in “by historicism,” the word “early” was added, but without any sign indicating it should be inserted.

78. The sentence reading “And this was fatal . . . *past*.” was added by hand at the bottom of the page, with a sign indicating where it should be inserted in the text.

79. In the typescript, the bracketed sentence reading “A glance . . . lingering on.” was also bracketed by hand. For reasons of readability, the editors have chosen to omit the latter bracketing. In the same sentence, the words “, to put it mildly,” were inserted by hand.

80. Above “The progressivist” the words “They did not ask” were inserted by hand, but without a sign indicating it should be inserted as a replacement.

81. This sentence was inserted by hand.
82. The sentence reading "he is convinced in spite . . . understood himself" was bracketed by hand.
83. "the travels of Odysseus" was inserted by hand
84. "by that image" was inserted by hand
85. "sober and serious" was added by hand to replace "earnest" which was crossed out.
86. Following "serious readers," the words "by that image" were crossed out.
87. "their" was crossed out.
88. "philosophic" was inserted by hand
89. "he" was inserted by hand to replace "they," which was crossed out
90. Between "J. Klein's" and "analysis" the word "study" was crossed out.
91. The passage reading "While the modern historian . . . modern algebra," including the handwritten insertion, was bracketed by hand.
92. The passage reading "and who . . . Greek language" was inserted by hand.
93. "most" was inserted by hand to replace "the," which was crossed out.
94. "shows" was inserted by typewriter to replace "implies," which was crossed out.
95. "need" was inserted by hand to replace "must," which was crossed out.
96. "need" was inserted by hand to replace "must," which was crossed out.
97. "denies" inserted by hand to replace "excludes," which was crossed out.
98. "reasonableness" was inserted by hand to replace "possibility," which was crossed out.
99. The sentence reading "it denies . . . true doctrine" was inserted by hand. For reasons of readability, the editors have added a full stop and rendered the following sentence as a new sentence by capitalizing "accordingly."
100. "position" was inserted by hand to replace "philosophy," which was crossed out.
101. "according to the predominant view" was inserted by hand.
102. "certain contemporaries of ours" was inserted to replace "we," which was crossed out.
103. Following the word "understand," the word "to-day" was crossed out. We have added the word "art" after "plastic."
104. Above "ever did" the words "could have done" were added by hand, possibly as an alternative.
105. "thought and thinks" was inserted by hand to replace "was" which was crossed out. "Nonhistorical" was changed by hand to "nonhistorically."
106. Sentence was inserted by hand as a note.
107. "degenerated" was inserted to replace "declined," which was crossed out.
108. "abandoned" was inserted to replace "given up," which was crossed out.
109. "a pre-" in "a presocial state" was inserted by hand to replace "an a-," which was crossed out.
110. Following the words "state of nature," the passage "The implication of such charges . . . Actually, however" was bracketed by hand. Since Strauss replaced the previous last five words, "But quite apart from this" by "Actually, however," he may have intended to leave this section out, at least during delivery.
111. "a" was inserted by hand to replace "the," which was crossed out.

112. “.” was added by hand.
113. “it mistakes” was inserted by hand to replace “that,” which was crossed out.
114. “for” was inserted by hand to replace “is the same as,” which was crossed out.
115. “so much” was inserted by hand.
116. “as” was inserted by hand to replace “but,” which was crossed out.
117. “But quite apart from this” was typed and not obviously crossed out, but we are presenting the handwritten alternative “Actually, however.”
118. “if a hypothetical account,” was inserted by hand.
119. “which should be the *introduction* for” was inserted by hand to replace “to be succeeded by,” which was crossed out.
120. “position” in “philosophic position” was inserted by hand to replace “question,” which was crossed out
121. “5.” was inserted by hand.
122. The passage reading “That controversy . . . the good cause” was bracketed by hand.
123. “were to” was inserted by typewriter to replace “should,” which was crossed out.
124. “thought of the” was inserted by typewriter.
125. “Set forth in the books of” was inserted by hand to replace “expounded by.”
126. “Of” was inserted by hand to replace “by,”
127. The entire paragraph was bracketed by hand.
128. “6.” was inserted by hand.
129. The sentence reading “Witness . . . research.” was added by hand at the bottom of the page, with a sign indicating where it should be inserted in the text.
130. “typical” was inserted by hand to replace “best,” which was crossed out.
131. Following “a collection of true prejudices” there is a sign referring to a note added by hand at the bottom of the page, but the note was crossed out.
132. “inherited” was originally underlined by typewriter. The underlining was crossed out by hand.
133. Following “the modern view.” the beginning of a sentence was crossed out by typewriter: “For the time being, it would be wise.”
134. “7.” was added by hand.
135. Following “principles themselves,” a sentence was crossed out by typewriter: “Yet, it is asserted that any restoration is condemned to sterility.” The passage reading “Every renaissance . . . principles themselves.” was bracketed by hand.
136. “a” was inserted by hand to replace “the,” which was crossed out.
137. “it is asserted that” was inserted by hand.
138. “might” was inserted by hand.
139. Following “offer us,” the words “in the best case” were crossed out by hand.
140. Beneath the text, the word “Dixi—” was added by hand.